

Message Text

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FROM WASHINGTON

TO AIG 6006, 6007

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NATO CONFIDENTIAL FROM WASHINGTON

POLITICAL ANALYSIS: LEBANON'S CHRISTIANS CONSIDER PARTICIPATION

1. BEGIN TEXT: THE CURRENT OUTBURST OF FIGHTING IN
LEBANON MAY BE THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ROUND OF HOSTILITIES
OR MERELY A SHORT BREAK IN THE CEASE-FIRE. IN ANY CASE,
EVEN THE MOST OPTIMISTIC OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT THE CEASE-
FIRE WILL NOT LAST BEYOND NEXT SPRING.

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2. IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS, CONFIDENCE IN THE VIABILITY
AND FUTURE OF A UNITED LEBANON HAS ERODED CONSIDERABLY.
DURING THE RECENT FIGHTING, EACH SIDE SOUGHT TERRITORIAL
CONTROL AS MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS UPROOTED DISLOYAL

ELEMENTS FROM MIXED AREAS AND TRIED TO EXPAND THEIR OWN

ENCLAVES.

3. MANY LEBANESE CHRISTIANS WHO ONLY SIX MONTHS AGO HAD NO INTEREST IN PARTITION HAVE BEGUN TO VIEW THE SEPARATION OF THE COMMUNITIES AS A POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE TO CONTINUED VIOLENCE OR TO A MUSLIM-DOMINATED LEBANON. TODAY, PROMINENT NATIONAL LEADERS ARE BEGINNING TO DISCUSS THIS QUESTION PUBLICLY:

(AGLAACHARBEL KASSIS, SUPERIOR GENERAL OF THE MARONITE ORDER OF MONKS, HELD A SEMINAR EARLY IN NOVEMBER ON THE FUTURE OF LEBANON. ACCORDING TO A PRIEST WHO ATTENDED, "90 PERCENT OF THE PARTICIPANTS CAME OUT FOR PARTITION, ALBEIT RELUCTANTLY."

(B)--PHALANGE LEADER PIERRE GEMAYEL TOLD THE NATIONAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE ON NOVEMBER 3 THAT 50 TO 60 PERCENT OF LEBANESE CHRISTIANS WERE THINKING SERIOUSLY OF PARTITION AND THAT, UNLESS QUICK STEPS WERE TAKEN, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO PREVENT.

(C)--RAYMOND EDDE, LEADER OF THE NATIONAL BLOC, WARNED ON OCTOBER 30 THAT DE FACTO PARTITION INTO FEUDING CAMPS COULD LEAD EVENTUALLY TO LEGAL PARTITION.

4. ARGUMENTS FOR PARTITION: AMONG THE MORE COMMON CHRISTIAN ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF PARTITION ARE THE FOLLOWING:

(A)--THE CHRISTIANS HAVE AS MUCH RIGHT TO HAVE THEIR OWN COUNTRY AS DO THE JEWS. THE 1860 MASSACRES OF CHRISTIANS AT THE HANDS OF THE DRUZE, MUSLIMS, AND OTTOMAN OFFICIALS ARE AS VIVID TO MANY CHRISTIANS AS THE HOLOCAUST IS TO THE JEWS. MOREOVER, SINCE THERE ARE MORE CHRISTIANS IN THE FERTILE CRESCENT THAN JEWS IN ISRAEL, A CHRISTIAN STATE WOULD BE VIABLE.

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TIAN STATE WOULD BE VIABLE.

(B)--THE PALESTINIAN PRESENCE HAS CREATED A STATE WITHIN THE LEBANESE STATE. PARTITION WOULD EXCLUDE MANY AREAS ALREADY BEYOND THE ACTUAL CONTROL OF THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT AND PROVIDE A STATE FREE OF ARMED FEDAYEEN.

(C)--LEBANESE MUSLIMS, SINCE THE INCEPTION OF THE STATE, HAVE PLAYED THE ROLE OF A TROJAN HORSE. THE MUSLIMS ALWAYS HAVE HAD EXTRA-TERRITORIAL LOYALTIES GREATER THAN THEIR LOYALTY TO LEBANON, AS THEY DEMONSTRATED IN THE 1958 CIVIL WAR.

(D)--THE UNENDING FIGHTING HAS DESTROYED LEBANON'S

POSITION AS THE "SWITZERLAND OF THE MIDDLE EAST." THIS IMAGE CAN BE RESTORED ONLY BY SEPARATING MODERATE LEBANESE FROM THE MORE RADICAL ELEMENTS.

5. CHRISTIAN REACTIONS: RECEPTIVITY TO PARTITION VARIES AMONG THE CHRISTIAN SECTS.

(A)--THE MARONITES, WELL OVER HALF OF THE CHRISTIAN POPULATION, WOULD BE MOST RECEPTIVE TO PARTITION SHOULD THEY DECIDE THAT THEIR CONTINUED PREDOMINANCE WITHIN LEBANON IS NO LONGER POSSIBLE. MOST MARONITES ARE EITHER MOUNTAIN VILLAGERS OR TOWNSPEOPLE WHO STILL IDENTIFY WITH THE VILLAGERS. THEY ARE THE SECT MOST COMMITTED TO MAINTAINING LEBANON AS A WESTERN-ORIENTED, CHRISTIAN-DOMINATED STATE.

(B)--THE GREEK ORTHODOX, THE SECOND LARGEST CHRISTIAN SECT BUT LESS THAN A THIRD AS NUMEROUS AS THE MARONITES, ARE THE LEAST RECEPTIVE TO PARTITION. THEY ARE THE MOST URBANIZED CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY, OFTEN LIVING IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE URBAN MUSLIM MAJORITY, AND WOULD FACE THE UNPALATABLE CHOICE OF EITHER LEAVING THEIR HOMES OR

FACING MUSLIM DOMINATION IF PARTITION OCCURRED. MOREOVER, MOST LEFTIST CHRISTIANS, WHO WOULD OPPOSE PARTITION, ARE GREEK ORTHODOX. MANY OF THESE LEFTISTS ARE CONFIDENTIAL

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MEMBERS OF THE SYRIAN NATIONALIST SOCIALIST PARTY (PPS), WHICH ESPOUSES THE UNION OF LEBANON WITH SYRIA.

(C)--GREEK CATHOLICS GENERALLY SUPPORT THE MARONITES, EVEN THOUGH, SINCE MANY LIVE CLOSE TO MUSLIM STRONGHOLDS, THEY WOULD HAVE TO MOVE IF LEBANON WERE PARTITIONED.

(D)--ARMENIANS, BECAUSE OF THEIR NON-ARAB ORIGINS, HAVE GENERALLY ASSUMED A LOW PROFILE. THEIR DOMINANT POLITICAL ORGANIZATION, THE TASHNAK PARTY, HAS BEEN ALLIED WITH THE PHALANGE, WHOSE DEPUTY LEADER, JOSEPH CHADER, IS AN ARMENIAN. THEY WOULD PROBABLY BE FAVORABLY DISPOSED TOWARD PARTITION.

6. MUSLIM REACTIONS: MUSLIM ATTITUDES TOWARD PARTITION DIFFER ON THE BASIS OF SECT AND ON THE DEGREE OF SUPPORT THAT TRADITIONAL MUSLIM LEADERS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO RETAIN. PROMINENT MUSLIM POLITICIANS, SUCH AS PRIME MINISTER KARAMI AND SAEB SALAM, HAVE ALREADY LOST MUCH OF THEIR CONSTITUENCY TO RADICALS, SUCH AS FARUQ MUQADDAM (IN TRIPOLI) AND IBRAHIM QULAYLAT (IN BEIRUT).

(A)--SUNNIS, WHO ARE CONCENTRATED IN THE URBAN CENTERS AND

IN THE NORTH, ARE DIVIDED ON THIS ISSUE. THE TRADITIONAL LEADERS OPPOSE PARTITION, WHICH WOULD PROBABLY MEAN AMALGAMATION OF THEIR HOME AREAS INTO SYRIA. SOME OF THE RADICALS BELIEVE THAT THEY CAN DOMINATE ALL OF LEBANON. OTHERS FAVOR UNION WITH SYRIA. SOME HAVE ACHIEVED VIRTUAL INDEPENDENCE IN THE MUSLIM STRONGHOLDS OF TRIPOLI AND SUDAN.

(B)--SHI'A , WHO ARE AS NUMEROUS AS THE SUNNIS, OPPOSE PARTITION BECAUSE IT OFFERS THEM THE UNHAPPY PROSPECT OF BEING INCORPORATED INTO SUNNI SYRIA OR JEWISH ISRAEL.

(C)--THE DRUZE, WHOSE NUMBERS HAVE DECLINED RELATIVE TO THE POPULATION AS A WHOLE, ARE SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE THEY LIVE NEXT TO THE CHRISTIANS ON MOUNT LEBANON. THOSE DRUZE WHO ARE ALLIED WITH THE CHRISTIANS, SUCH AS MAJID ARSLAN, A TRADITIONAL LEADER, WOULD FOLLOW THE CHRISTIAN CONFIDENTIAL

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LEAD. KAMAL JUNBLATT, ANOTHER TRADITIONAL LEADER AND HEAD OF THE PROGRESSIVE SOCIALIST PARTY, WOULD OPPOSE PARTITION.

7. PARTITION PLANS: AS TALK OF PARTITION HAS INCREASED, SEVERAL SCHEMES FOR DIVIDING THE POPULATION HAVE BEEN DISCUSSED. NONE OF THESE HAS YET BEEN FORMALLY ENDORSED BY LEBANESE POLITICAL FACTIONS. BUT THEY REPRESENT ALTERNATIVES THAT WOULD RECEIVE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION IN THE EVENT THAT LARGE-SCALE FIGHTING RESUMES.

8. UNDER MINIMAL BORDER ADJUSTMENTS, THE AREAS OF TRIPOLI, AKKARWN AND NORTH BAALBEK-HERMEL WOULD BE TURNED OVER TO THE SYRIANS. IN THE CHRISTIAN VIEW, THIS PLAN WOULD OFFER THE FOLLOWING ADVANTAGES:

(A)--A LARGE, PREDOMINANTLY SUNNI POPULATION WOULD NO LONGER BE UNDER LEBANESE JURISDICTION, THEREBY INCREASING THE CHRISTIAN PERCENTAGE OF THE LEBANESE POPULATION AND REDUCING RADICAL SUNNI INFLUENCE.

(B)--TWENTY PERCENT OF THE PALESTINIANS NOW IN LEBANON WOULD END UP IN THE SYRIAN PORTION.

(C)--RELATIVELY FEW CHRISTIANS WOULD HAVE TO MOVE.

(D)--BY CONFINING THE BORDER ADJUSTMENTS TO THE NORTHERN AREAS, ISRAEL WOULD NOT FEEL THREATENED AND THEREFORE WOULD NOT INTERVENE.

9. THE DISADVANTAGES OF A MODEST PARTITION PLAN INCLUDE:

(A)--THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF MOST PALESTINIANS AND MOST

SUNNI MUSLIMS WOULD NOT SOLVE LEBANON'S BASIC PROBLEM.

(B)--THE LOSS OF THE LARGE TRIPOLI REFINERY AND REVENUE FROM THE IRAQ PIPELINE WOULD CAUSE SERIOUS ECONOMIC DISRUPTIONS.

10. UNDER A RAEICAL PARTITION FORMULA, LEBANON WOULD BE REDUCED TO THE APPROXIMATE BOUNDARIES OF THE OTTOMAN
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GOVERNORATE OF MOUNT LEBANON. THE CHRISTIANS SEE THE FOLLOWING ADVANTAGES:

(A)--NEARLY ALL AREAS OF MUSLIM DOMINANCE WOULD BE REMOVED, AND THE CHRISTIANS WOULD HAVE A PERMANENT MAJORITY.

(B)--THE RESULTING POLITICAL STABILITY WOULD ENSURE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY.

11. THE DISADVANTAGES OF THIS APPROACH, IN THE CHRISTIAN VIEW, INCLUDE:

(A)--LARGE AREAS UNDER CHRISTIAN CONTROL WOULD LIE BEYOND LEBANON'S BORDERS.

(B)--ALTHOUGH ALL APPROACHES TO BEIRUT WOULD BE IN CHRISTIAN HANDS, THE LARGE MUSLIM/PALESTINIAN AREAS OF WEST BEIRUT WOULD FORM A HOSTILE ENCLAVE.

(C)--SUCH A RADICAL CHANGE COULD LEAD TO SYRIAN AND ISRAELI INTERVENTION.

(D)--THE ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENT TO THE TRUNCATION OF LEBANON WOULD BE DIFFICULT (THOUGH THESE PROBLEMS MIGHT BE LESS TROUBLESOME THAN CONTINUING STRIFE).

12. PROSPECTS: WHILE TALK OF PARTITION IS GROWING, THE

SITUATION WOULD HAVE TO DETERIORATE CONSIDERABLY BEFORE SUCH A RADICAL SOLUTION AS PARTITION WERE CONSIDERED SERIOUSLY. YET THE RECENT ROUND OF FIGHTING HAS LEFT SCARS THAT WILL MAKE PARTITION SEEM ALL THE MORE ATTRACTIVE IF FULL-SCALE COMMUNAL HOSTILITIES RESUME.

13. FOR PRACTICAL PURPOSES, MUCH OF THE BEIRUT AREA AND THE REMAINDER OF LEBANON ARE ALREADY DIVIDED INTO SEMI-

AUTONOMOUS ENCLAVES. THE PHALANGE, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS NEVER EXERCISED GREATER CONTROL OVER EAST BEIRUT THAN IT DOES TODAY. TRIPOLI, UNDER LEFTIST MUSLIM CONTROL, IS
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EFFECTIVELY CUT OFF FROM THE REST OF THE COUNTRY. THE TREND
TOWARD ENCLAVIZATION HAS NOT GONE FAR ENOUGH TO
MAKE PARTITION INEVITABLE, BUT UNDER THE STIMULUS OF
RENEWED FIGHTING, THE PROCESS OF COMMUNAL SEPARATION
COULD LEAD TO A MORE FORMALIZED DIVISION OF LEBANON.
END TEXT. KISSINGER

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